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RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1539
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000245

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
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AF/S FOR S.HILL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E.LOKEN
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B.PITTMAN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE UPDATE: MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR SLAIN
ACTIVIST TOMORROW; WEEKEND MDC PRO-SENATE FACTION RALLY
FIZZLES

Summary

¶1. (SBU) The memorial service for slain MDC activist Gift Tandare will be held tomorrow. The organizers are planning a low-key event to avoid government intervention. Western diplomats plan to attend as a further restraint. Separately, the pro-Senate MDC faction's plans for a weekend rally to demonstrate opposition to the government fizzled when the government lifted the ban for the event. End Summary.

Memorial Service for Slain Activist

¶2. (SBU) The Save Zimbabwe Campaign intends to hold a memorial service March 27 for Gift Tandare, the opposition activist slain by police on March 11. Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube will deliver the main sermon at the service, which will be held at the Northside Community Church in the low density suburb of Borrowdale. Speakers will include NCA president Lovemore Madhuku, and MDC leaders Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara.

¶3. (SBU) The organizers of the service told us the venue was selected in order to minimize the threat of government intervention. Northside Community Church is located in a low-density area in one of the more affluent areas of Harare. The organizers said for the same reason there were no plans to hold a march in connection with the service. Save

Zimbabwe organizers told us they would bus attendees to the church from their homes in high-density areas. They expected two to three thousand people to attend.

14. (SBU) Organizers were cautiously optimistic that the service would not provoke arrests or violence by government security agents. However, the Save Zimbabwe campaign has issued invitations to the diplomatic community, and Charge, accompanied by other Embassy officials, will attend. Most of the European Ambassadors are also planning to attend. (N.B. We have worked closely with the UK Mission to ensure a large turnout of diplomats both to forestall the possibility of violence and to signal that the diplomatic corps in Harare will do its job regardless of GOZ threats.)

Pro-Senate rally fizzles

15. (SBU) The GOZ last week officially announced a one-month ban on demonstrations in several arare areas. Police officials had previously announced a sweeping three month ban, which would likely have been struck down by the courts, as even the draconian Public Security and Order Act (POSA) limits such bans to one month. The government then promptly lifted the ban for a scheduled March 24 rally by the pro-Senate faction of the MDC in the high-density area of Chitungwiza.

16. (SBU) The rally had been called in the first place to demonstrate the pro-Senate faction's willingness to take on the government and to dampen criticism that they were hiding behind Morgan Tsvangirai's anti-Senate faction. In any

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event, the pro-Senate leadership apparently decided not to push the rally and few of their supporters showed. Allowing the demonstration to proceed appears to have been another attempt on the part of the GOZ to divide the two MDC factions.

Comment

17. (SBU) There is a sense that things have calmed down in Zimbabwe for now. We do not anticipate violence at the Tandare service. There is, however, a good chance that the government may try to limit the number of mourners at the event by stopping the buses from the high-density areas. In addition to an Embassy presence at the service, we will also be monitoring government actions elsewhere in Harare. End Comment.
SCHULTZ